



Written by [James Murphy](#) on April 1, 2024

Israeli Professor: October 7 Was a Distraction From Iran's Nuclear Ambitions

Was the October 7 terror attack on Israel merely the opening salvo of a much larger plan involving Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and the Islamic Republic of Iran? It's a question being raised by one Israeli academic who knows a little about such things. Professor Jacob Nagel, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and a professor at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, as well as a former advisor to Benjamin Netanyahu on national security issues, [raised](#) the possibility recently with the Jewish News Syndicate (JNS).



AP Images
Iranian ballistic missile

According to Nagel, the Hamas attack of October 7 last year was a "weapon of mass distraction," which could lead quickly to a nuclear-armed Iran.

Under Nagel's scenario, Israel could become bogged down in the Gaza dispute while other Iranian proxies such as the Houthis out of Yemen keep the world community busy with small-scale actions. Hezbollah could then attack Israel out of the north in a more full-scale war, further distracting the Jewish state.

The distraction could then allow Iran to continue its quest to create a nuclear weapon without the prying eyes of the world community taking too much notice.

"This scenario cannot be ruled out," Nagel told JNS.

Nagel's scenario is already playing out much as he describes. Houthi rebels have been steadily launching drone attacks since January. The U.S. Navy [claims](#) it engaged Houthi drones in the Red Sea this week. France's naval force [engaged](#) Houthi drones in the Red Sea this weekend.

So, the Houthis are doing their part, how about Hezbollah?

General Esmail Ghaani, who oversees Iranian support for proxies, was reportedly in Beirut recently discussing the implications for Iran should Israel engage in Lebanon with Hezbollah. According to Reuters, Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah assured Ghaani that Hezbollah would gladly assume the mantle of Israel's opponent.

"This is our fight," Nasrallah reportedly told the Iranian general.

So the stage is being set, so to speak, for Nagel's scenario to unfold just as he suspected it might.

"The events that have occurred so far do not disprove the idea that Iran has a multi-stage plan," Nagel explained. "I think today we are at the stage where Iran is developing the components of the 'weapons group' in the nuclear program," he added, in reference to the work that needs to occur alongside



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uranium enrichment in order to assemble nuclear warheads.

Of course, Iran would never announce its intention to become a nuclear nation.

“There is no categorical Iranian decision to break through to nuclear weapons, nor will such a decision be seen anywhere, because this would attract pressure on Iran,” Nagel said.

But the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN organization tasked with monitoring Iran’s nuclear ambitions, recently warned that the Islamic nation has recently become somewhat secretive about its uranium-enrichment practices.

In February, IAEA Director-General Rafael Mariano Grossi claimed that Iran was “not entirely transparent” about its nuclear ambitions. According to Grossi, Iran’s secretive stance “increases dangers,” especially considering the “accumulation of complexities” in the Middle East.

Speaking at the World Governor’s Summit in Dubai, Grossi also noted “loose talk about nuclear weapons” in Iran, with one Iranian official reportedly saying “we have everything” to make a nuclear weapon.

Grossi may have been referring to remarks made in February by former Iranian nuclear head Ali Akhbar Salehi, who claimed that Iran had crossed “all the scientific and technological nuclear thresholds” in order to build a nuclear weapon. Previously, the current head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), Mohammad Eslami, had claimed that Iran was capable of building nuclear weapons, but also stated, “we do not want to do it.”

Some nations have noted Iran’s recent surreptitiousness regarding its nuclear program. The U.K., France, and Germany, the so-called E3 nations, raised the issue with the IAEA in early March in a [letter](#).

The E3 nations commended Grossi and the IAEA for their “efforts to engage Iran to clarify information regarding the ‘correctness and completeness’ of its declarations under its NPT Safeguards Agreement. Due to Iran’s prolonged failure to address outstanding safeguards issues, the Agency is unable to assure that Iran’s nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful.”

The E3 demanded that “Iran must urgently, fully and unambiguously co-operate with the [IAEA],” going forward.

Iran not allowing full transparency regarding its nuclear ambitions is, of course, problematic — especially for Israel.

“Israel has to prepare — as it has prepared all of these past years — to strike the nuclear program,” Nagel warned. “If it was not for Israeli activities, Iran would have long ago become a nuclear state. It’s clear that it would have already had enriched enough military-grade uranium for a bomb. Many do not understand this.”



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